



I was pleased to facilitate a special project by 20 students from Brien McMahon High School's Senators Community Foundation in Norwalk to memorialize victims of child abuse in Connecticut. On a cold and windy April morning, the students placed 9,422 paper lunch bags on the lawn of the State Capitol, each bag representing one victim of child abuse in our state last year.

Aid For Our Towns

A very important part of my job representing the people of the 25th state Senate District is ensuring Darien and Norwalk receive their fair share of state funding. I am pleased to report the following grants and reimbursements from the state in Fiscal Year 2008–2009:

	Fiscal Year 08-09
Total Education Grants	\$12,075,000
Town Aid Road Fund Grant	\$607,537
Mashantucket Pequot & Mohegan Fund Grant	\$1,342,194
Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP)	\$757,310
Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)	\$1,723,508
Total	\$16,505,550

Keep Our County's Sky Free of Commercial Jets

The Federal Aviation Administration wants to enact a plan that would put up to 70 commercial airplanes per day in the airspace over Fairfield County. The airspace redesign is poorly researched and will jeopardize the quality of life for thousands of residents without doing much at all to relieve airway congestion. This year, I joined advocates and my colleagues on the state and federal level to fight this ill-conceived plan.



Merritt Interchange

Plans for a cloverleaf design on the long-awaited interchange between the Merritt Parkway and Route 7 have been met with harsh criticism from area residents with concerns about the environmental impact and overall safety of the design. This spring, I worked with the Department of Transportation to organize public hearings on the project so that all voices can be heard. While we all want to see the interchange completed, we cannot fail to appreciate the very important concerns of the people who live in this area.

Want to be Advised When to Fly Your Flag at Half Staff?

Last year, I began an alert system to inform those who regularly fly the flag at either their home or business. I did so because with our current conflicts, the president or governor may order flags flown at half-staff when one of our brave service members is killed defending our freedom. Please contact me if you'd like to receive an e-mail alert at the change of the flag's status. The list is not public, and the information will not be used for any other purpose. I view this as an opportunity to pay our respects in our own small way.



Dear Neighbor:

By almost any measure, the nation is in a recession, and states across America are feeling the effects.


Connecticut faces these uncertain times with a biennial budget that makes important investments in local schools, roads, health care, school readiness, municipal aid, criminal justice programs, and other vital needs.

However, state revenue forecasts continue to drop, and just as Connecticut's families are tightening their belts, so must our state government. While we held the line on any new spending during this past legislative session, we were still able to find ways to help the people of our state by enacting long-needed reforms in our criminal justice system, health care, consumer protection and the environment.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bob Duff



Fighting the High Cost of Gasoline & Energy

We all know that the cost of fuel is sky-high—affecting how much you pay for gas and groceries. While we can't stop fuel prices from rising, we can prevent tax increases from further driving up the cost. This June, we said NO to a scheduled increase in the gross receipts tax. By blocking this tax hike, we're hoping to save you a few cents on each gallon, and that adds up. We're also taking action to help seniors and working families survive the high cost of the looming home heating oil season.

State Senator
Bob Duff

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Norwalk

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State Senator
BOB DUFF
25TH DISTRICT



LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Lowering Health Care Costs for Municipalities and Small Businesses

The Connecticut Healthcare Partnership would allow municipalities, small businesses and nonprofits to voluntarily join the state employee health insurance plan. By expanding this large pool of insured, we would increase bargaining power and lower costs for municipalities. Not only would this benefit property tax payers, but it would also benefit small businesses—they create the vast majority of jobs in Connecticut, but are hit the hardest when it comes to skyrocketing health care costs. Unfortunately, this bill was vetoed by the governor.



Keeping Jobs and Tax Revenue in Connecticut

Many Connecticut-based companies are losing state contracts to out-of-state companies. Instead of using state contracts to create jobs here, all too often multi-million dollar contracts are awarded to consulting firms in Arizona, printers in Michigan, and so on. I helped to pass a law that will keep more of our tax dollars and jobs in Connecticut. The ‘reciprocal preference’ or ‘Golden Rule’ bill levels the playing field for local companies competing with certain out-of-state companies.

Victory Over Broadwater

We received great news when we learned that the State of New York rejected Broadwater Energy’s plan to construct a floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in the middle of Long Island Sound. It would set a bad precedent by commercializing Long Island Sound, and would not guarantee lower cost natural gas to New York. We all must work together to address our region’s energy challenges by conserving and bringing alternative energy sources on line in an environmentally sound manner.

Raising the Minimum Wage

The General Assembly passed legislation to increase the state minimum hourly wage from \$7.65 to \$8.00 beginning January 1, 2009 and to \$8.25 beginning January 1, 2010. The governor vetoed this bill—which would have benefited nearly 65,000 low-income workers in our state and provided them with some financial relief from the rising cost of living.



Helping Save for Retirement

Saving for retirement is getting more difficult. People who work for small businesses have it especially tough—nearly 70 percent of small businesses don’t offer retirement plans. I supported a bill that—had it become law—would have made Connecticut the first state in the nation to enact a retirement plan for small business employees, nonprofits, and the self-employed.

Ethics Reform

This year, we made ethics reform a top priority, and I’m proud that we passed a comprehensive ethics reform bill that, in the end, passed with broad bipartisan support. Most importantly, it protects taxpayers from paying the pensions of corrupt officials.

Veterans’ Benefits

Legislation was approved to provide additional educational opportunities for certain veterans and their families. One measure requires the state-run institutions of higher education to offer tuition waivers for any state resident who is a dependent or surviving spouse of an active-duty military member who was killed in action after September 11, 2001. In addition, the tuition waiver for veterans will be expanded to include graduate school tuition for National Guard members beginning July 1, 2008.



Closing Sexual Offender Loopholes

There are nearly 5,000 sex offenders living in Connecticut. The state’s sex offender Web site averages over 1 million visits per year from concerned parents and others seeking to keep their loved ones safe. The General Assembly is doing its part by passing a bill that prohibits a sex offender from changing his or her name without first notifying the public safety commissioner, and by requiring the sex offender to sign a sworn affidavit that they are not seeking to avoid the legal consequences of their criminal conviction. Regardless of any possible name change, all sex offenders must still provide the state police with their name, address, date of birth and other personal information.



Protecting Homeowners and Our Economy

This year, I helped write comprehensive legislation designed to keep families in their homes and proactively protect our state’s economy from the national subprime mortgage crisis. Across the country, quality of life is being diminished, home values are plummeting, and families are faced with difficult choices as home foreclosure rates have skyrocketed 75 percent since 2006.

About 71,000 Connecticut mortgages are adjustable-rate, high-interest subprime mortgages, and 21,000 of those will reset to a higher rate in the next 12 months.

The legislation we passed created a special loan program which allows the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to purchase home loans from lenders and place eligible borrowers on affordable payment schedules for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages. We also re-initiated the state’s Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program and gave CHFA the authority to purchase foreclosed homes to create affordable and supportive housing. These programs will help thousands of Connecticut families and will help prevent the mass foreclosures other states have experienced over the past year.

Additionally, we created a foreclosure mediation program for lenders and borrowers, established a mortgage crisis job training team, and created new restrictions and licensing requirements for mortgage lenders and brokers to prevent predatory lending practices in the future. All these initiatives were created without increasing state spending.



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At a Capitol press conference in February, I outlined my comprehensive package of short- and long-term reforms aimed at keeping subprime mortgage holders in their homes and preserving Connecticut’s economy. Behind me is Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and Senate President Pro Tempore Donald Williams.

TO RECEIVE MORE INFORMATION on any of the following issues, fill out this coupon and mail it to me, e-mail or call my office. Make sure to give your name and mailing address and indicate which issues you’re interested in. My contact information is on the opposite side of this mailer.

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